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The testimony of James J. Gallagher, Associate Commissioner for Education of the Handicapped, in favor of the Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act (HR. 17829) is presented. The advantages of preschool education for the handicapped and recommendations for model preschool programs gathered from the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children and from seven regional conferences, which included 700 educational professionals from the 50 states, are mentioned. Lack of existing facilities, the scarcity of preschool programs planned, and the incidence of handicapped children requiring help are described; and essential elements in a total program of research, development, demonstration, training, and implementation are indicated. (SN)

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Statement by
James J. Gallagher
Associate Commissioner for Education for the Handicapped
Office of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Before the
Select Subcommittee on Education
of the
Committee on Education and Labor
House of Representatives
Tuesday, July 16, 1968
10:00 a.m. EDT

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The Associate Commissioner is accompanied by:

Dr. Edwin Martin, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Education for the Handicapped
Dr. James W. Moss, Director, Division of Research
Dr. Frank Withrow, Director, Division of Educational Services
Dr. Leonard Lucito, Director, Division of Training Programs
Dr. Albert L. Alford, Assistant Commissioner for Legislation

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am James J. Gallagher, Associate Commissioner for Education for the Handicapped. I am very pleased to be here this morning to testify on behalf of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on H.R. 17829 which would authorize preschool and early education programs for handicapped children.

There is probably no sounder proposition in education than "the earlier the child is educated, the greater the return for energy spent." This is particularly true of the handicapped child where problems in early development can multiply upon one another and create even more serious problems before the youngster is ready to enter the traditional school program. Yet, it is one thing to know such a principle and another thing to act upon it.

There is an atmosphere of optimism about what can be accomplished with preschool handicapped children, particularly in view of the work of persons such as Dr. Kirk who will be a witness here today and the experience of such centers as the John Tracy Clinic for Deaf Children in providing early education for the handicapped. We no longer feel that we must sit and wait for the child's development to reach a certain level before we start to educate him. We now believe that, working with parents and the child, we can help the child accelerate his own rate of development. There is good reason to believe that meaningful improvements can be made in the handicapped child's intellectual, social and motivational development with the intervention of a professionally designed program.

There is a strongly felt need throughout the special education community for such action. There are now only beginning efforts at State and local

levels at providing this educational opportunity. In some States school programs for handicapped cannot serve children younger than 6 years of age. In others, preschool programs for deaf or severely hard of hearing children are allowed, but similar programs are not available for the retarded or the emotionally disturbed.

In its first annual report to the Congress and to the Commissioner of Education, the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children specifically recommended the development of model programs of preschool education for handicapped children. Dr. Samuel Kirk, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, will be testifying before the Subcommittee later this morning, and I am sure he will give you more information about that Committee's recommendations. We were impressed with the National Advisory Committee's analysis of the need for such programs not only on educational, social, and, perhaps even moral grounds, but also in terms of the potential economic benefits to our society.

In addition to the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee, we have also had the chance this year to have face-to-face discussions with over 700 leaders in the professions responsible for education of the handicapped in all of the 50 States. Through a series of seven regional conferences we have talked with school teachers, principals, superintendents, State department of education personnel, college teachers, researchers and others vitally interested in this area, about what they felt to be the most critically important needs for handicapped children. We asked these groups to help us develop our long-range planning efforts by giving us grass roots advice on the identification of priorities and suggesting strategies for meeting current

problems. In every meeting the need for early development of preschool and early education programs received major attention.

The leaders of the Special Education Community called upon the Federal Government for additional stimulation and leadership in this area. They are interested in knowing what kinds of curricula such programs should have, what kinds of children might be grouped together, what kinds of preparation teachers should have, and sought support for the initiation of such programs from the national government.

Of the 54 States or territories participating in programs authorized by Title VI-A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 31 reported planning to spend part of their Title VI allotment on preschool programs. Another 21 States did not anticipate spending any Title VI funds on preschool programs. Sixteen States, over half of the 31, anticipated spending less than $22,000 on preschool programs. Although the State plans showed preschool programs receiving a consistently high rating in the listing on goals for education of the handicapped in the States, the allocation of funds indicated other program needs were taking precedence. In looking into this situation we find a number of factors operating to hinder the development of preschool programs.

First, there is an overwhelming need for basic educational opportunity for handicapped children. The States report that only 1.5 million of more than 5.5 million school-age handicapped children are currently receiving the special educational services they need. This tremendous need for services creates a pressure for spending available resources to meet current problems. It may be more realistic, however, to recognize the enormity of the task,

and to begin to funnel resources toward preschool education as the best way to meet the long-range goal of services to these children. With early intervention many children may be returned to the regular classes, or helped so that their disabilities require less extensive special education services.

A second factor operating to delay the development of preschool programs is the scarcity of information about such programs. Although there have been successful programs reported in the research literature, and a small number of communities have been operating successful programs, systematic information about the structure and successes of these programs has not been widely available. One of the great challenges facing education of the handicapped and, for that matter, all education, is the development of mechanisms or institutions designed to hasten the adoption in the classrooms of the findings of scientists in the universities and the creative educator in his classroom.

As we have gained some experience in the development of new programs, we know that efficient program development depends, not only on money but also upon the tying together of various components of a total system; each part of which is made more important because it is part of a total plan. The essential elements in a total program would seem to be:

1. Research--to provide a sound base of knowledge of the handicapped child upon which to base a program.
2. Development--in which curriculum and techniques are developed and designed to meet the particular needs of the preschool handicapped.
3. Demonstration--in which programs of excellence are established as models from which other communities and schools are able to pattern its activities, using the best of current wisdom and skills.

4. Training--the development of a cadre of well-trained professionals and supportive personnel to man the new programs.

5. Implementation--the development of quality programs dispersed through all areas of the country.

Mr. Chairman, it is our feeling that a program which can help provide a very appropriate response to these challenges is needed. We should not strike out impetuously in various directions attempting to solve, in one giant stride, the whole problem of provision of preschool education for handicapped children.

We would anticipate that the programs like those possible under the "Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act" could provide the Nation's school systems with a variety of models, and with good descriptive information about those models, which they could use to bring about the orderly development of preschool education for handicapped children. The chance to evaluate the programs systematically and have available the findings from this evaluation should assure that the most successful models are replicated, and gain wisdom through unsatisfactory attempts to develop programs. Such programs could provide an essential component in a system that already includes our research and training authorities that are currently developing plans and programs in preschool education.

Mr. Chairman, we think the full development of preschool services will make an important contribution to the entire future of education for handicapped children--and we are pleasedto have the chance to discuss these issues with you.

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